

Submission: Senate Enquiry into tolls roads

14 July 2017

I would support road tolls, just as I support payment for use of public transport, if the tolls were returned to the public purpose of maintaining the resource and funding the provision of further public transport. This is not the case with the proposed WestConnex system of tollroads.

Under the proposals for tolling the new series of WestConnex tollroads, the tolls will unfairly hit lower income users in Sydney's west. The average wage is \$600 per week in Sydney's west. Tolls are estimated to cost \$120 pw for a commuter from, for example, Campbelltown, by the time the toll roads are completed in approximately 2023. This is clearly unsustainable and inequitable.

Aside from the fact that the best way to remove traffic is to provide properly functioning public transport alternatives, the fact that the tolls will only serve to enrich a private company (Transurban) is an example of appalling planning.

The need to avoid tolls will create further gridlock. In WestConnex's own reports they acknowledge that many roads (including those in my area) will be worse off if WestConnex is built, than if it is not built. When the tolls start on the currently-'free' section of the M4, drivers will begin to understand the true cost of these roads. We pay four times:

- 1) our taxes are building the tollways, now estimated - by the only independent estimate produced by the City of Sydney, which takes into account all the extra road building now proposed to deal with the shifted choke points all over Sydney - to be \$45billion and the most expensive road or infrastructure project in Australian history;
- 2) our taxes will underwrite any losses;
- 3) we are paying for the lost opportunity of NOT spending the money now on public transport, before Sydney becomes even bigger;
- 4) we will pay way more than we can afford, to use the proposed tollroads, with the cost increasing at 4% a year, while our wages decrease or remain at an all-time low of 1.5%. This multiplying effect is compounded by the fact that it is proposed to actually decrease lanes in existing roads (including sections of Parramatta Road) in order to force people onto tolled roads.

I live very close to Parramatta Road, at one of its narrowest points. It is currently only ever congested during peak hours. Were commuters to be provided with good public transport, especially during peak hours (the parallel Western Rail Line is critically and increasingly congested during these times), there would be no need to build motorways; principally people needing vehicles for work or to transport goods or people (elderly or incapacitated) would need to use roads.

WestConnex, as it is currently proposed, is a scam that will pour tolls into the selected company for decades to the detriment of millions of people. Presumably, the lack of provision of public transport alternatives is to ensure that more money ends up in the hands of those same selected companies.

Tollways are clearly not a solution to traffic congestion.

